

Perinatal Mortality in Twins in a South Croatian Area before and during the 1991/93 War

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Aim: To compare pre-war and wartime perinatal twin mortality in the south Croatian cities of [ibenik, Zadar and Split.

Method: Hospital records on perinatal twin mortality in the South Croatian cities of [ibenik, Zadar and Split, recorded from January 1, 1988, until December 31, 1990 (peace period), were compared to those observed between January 1, 1991, and December 31, 1993 (war period). The data were compared by the chi-square test.

Results: Out of the 23,826 deliveries in the period of peace, 0.98% were twin deliveries, whereas the war period counted 1.17% twins out of the total number of 22,292 deliveries. Cesarean section was the way of birth for 34.6% and 28.5% twins in the peace and war periods, respectively. During the period of war, an increase was observed in the number of twins delivered in preterm gestational ages, as well as in the proportion of twins with a lower birth weight: fewer twins weighed 2,500 g or more (54.81% in the war vs. 63.89% in the peace period; $p < 0.01$). Among the war-born twins, those born on term were fewer in number (61.92% during the war vs 70.10% during the peace period; $p < 0.01$). The mortality ratios between the first and second twin were 1:1.75 and 1:1.56 in peace and war, respectively. Late fetal mortality was 1.50% and 3.08%, early neonatal mortality 3.21% and 5.77%, and total perinatal mortality 4.70% and 8.85% ($p < 0.05$) in peace and war, respectively.

Conclusions: War circumstances made the antenatal care of pregnant women in south Croatia difficult or, sometimes, impossible; further, they caused physical load and psychic stress, which led to an increase in late fetal, early neonatal and total perinatal twin mortality.

Key words: birth weight; gestational age; perinatal mortality; pregnancy, multiple; war